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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Thursday, April 30, 1942.

QUESTION BOX:

Best way to store garden products?
Use of army men's civilian suits?
Garden snails and slugs?

ANSWERS FROM:

Plant scientists, home economists, and entomologists, U.S. Department of Agriculture

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Today's questions range from storing the products of Victory gardens to men's suits and garden snails. Answers come from scientists in the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Our first writer asks: "If we have as many vegetables and fruits as we expect from our Victory garden, we're going to have a storage problem. Where can we get information on the best ways of keeping the different products, so we can improve our present storage facilities?"

Plant scientists of the Department have some suggestions for this woman. They say now is the time to decide what added storage places you need, so you can lay in lumber and other materials and complete your structures in readiness for the garden vegetables.

First-- have you considered how much you want to keep down cellar, also which vegetables? While some of the root crops will keep in an airy basement, most of them are even better off in outdoors frost-proof storage houses, or mounds, or in pits underground. Of course root vegetables include carrots, beets, turnips, parsnips, salsify, radishes. Celery generally keeps best in trenches.

Using outdoor storage for the root crops leaves the basement free for vegetables which need cellar temperature. You might write to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., for Farmers' Bulletin 879, on Home Storage of Vegetables, to get some ideas on the kind of storage place to make ready. This bulletin will also tell you the best ways of storing each product as it comes along

For example, you doubtless know that a dry attic is often recommended for onions, and a spot near the furnace for sweetpotatoes, pumpkins, and squash. The cellar is usually too warm for white potatoes and apples. Potatoes should also be in the dark. Better store potatoes and apples in an outdoor vegetable cellar or pit, but never together. The potatoes will ruin the flavor of the apples. House storage is satisfactory if the part used for storage is well insulated from the heat of the furnace, and ventilated from outside, but the temperature needs watching. Apples should be kept at 32 degrees, and potatoes not lower than 40 degrees.

You never store cabbage or turnips in the house, however, because of their strong, penetrating odor.

Maybe you were also thinking of improving your canned food pantry. If so, you might like to ask for another bulletin along with the one on home storage of vegetables. Farmers' Bulletin 1865, Closets and Storage Spaces, has a couple of pages devoted to the arrangement of the shelves and floor space in a good storeroom of this kind for a farm family.

We come next to a clothes question from a young woman whose husband has gained weight while away in army camp. "When my husband last came home on leave, his best civilian suit was too tight for him. I doubt if it will fit when he's out of the army. I am wondering if I couldn't make something of it. The material is all wool and extra good, and I have had considerable experience sewing for myself.

Clothing specialists of the Department say you might remodel the suit into a suit for yourself, if you are not too large. Rip the suit apart, clean and press all the pieces. You may even need to turn the material.

Now that skirts are short and fairly narrow, you can probably make a gored skirt out of the trousers. Turn the sections upside down, and, if necessary, use pieces trimmed off the length to make kick pleats or inset pieces for greater freedom at the knees.

If the coat has patch pockets you are in luck, because you will find whole cloth underneath them. If the suit has set-in pockets, the material has been slashed. Don't rip off such pockets until you see whether you can use them as they are. If they're not in good places for a woman's jacket, you'll have to remove them, of course, and then cover the cuts in some way. For example, you could put patch pockets over these cuts in better positions than the old pockets. Or you could cover them with odd-shaped ornamental pieces. Or stitch folds across the front sections to cover the slashes and look like an intended design.

The buttonholes on a man's coat are on the left front. As you would lap the right front over the left, on a woman's coat, just sew up or cut away the old buttonholes and make new ones on the right-hand side.

Look at the way the collar was put together when you take it apart, to cut by your pattern, and use hand-sewing wherever the tailor used it.

If you put the suit away now and work on it in the fall, be sure to protect it well from moths. Clean, brush, and sun it thoroughly, and pack it in a tightly sealed package with plenty of moth flakes.

Our last question for today is about those common garden pests-- snails and slugs. The writer wants to know if snails and slugs do any harm in a garden, and if so, how to get rid of them.

The entomologists of the Department say that both garden snails and slugs feed upon a wide variety of plants, damaging both young and mature vegetables, ornamentals, and vegetables stored in cellars, and also mushrooms.

The best method of getting rid of slugs and snails is to apply a poisoned bait over the infested area. You can prepare a satisfactory bait by using one ounce of powdered metaldehyde in three pounds of wheat bran or corn meal. If you have any difficulty in getting small quantities of metaldehyde to prepare your own bait, for small garden areas, the entomologists suggest that you use the commercial preparations for slug control containing this chemical.

Arsenical baits are less effective against slugs and snails than those which contain metaldehyde, and arsenic is poisonous to man as well as to birds, poultry, and other animals.

You can get more information about slugs and snails, if you want it, by writing to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, at Washington, D. C. Ask for Farmers' Bulletin 1895.

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